Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم: The Middle Way of Prophethood and Universal Spirituality

(A Comparative Study of Eastern Hermitage Traditions and Islamic Social Spirituality)

Jayanantaka

In the spiritual history of the world, the figure of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم occupies a unique position. He is not a hermit who rejects the world, nor is he a ruler who is immersed in worldly pleasures. The path he takes is the path of **tawassuth**—moderation—which balances body and spirit, between social work and the search for inner meaning, between the world and the hereafter. In this respect, he differed from other great spiritualists such as Siddhartha Gautama, the Hindu ṛṣi, and the Taoist mystics, who emphasized the path of liberation and self-seclusion. Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم actually brought spirituality rooted in the earth, leading humans to "become spiritual in the midst of the worldly."

Since his youth, Muhammad was known as a person who meditated a lot. He was often alone in the Ḥirā' Cave, on the summit of Jabal Nūr, especially at night. There he meditated, secluding himself from the hustle and bustle of Makkah which at that time was filled with materialistic and polytheistic practices. But his solitude did not mean a complete withdrawal from the world—every morning he went down to the city, mingled with the community, traded, helped the poor, and paid attention to the social conditions around him. This is where the first characteristic of his spirituality appears: **contemplation grounded in social reality.**

When the first revelation came, Muhammad's spirituality reached a new stage. It does not stop at the personal inner quest, but turns it into a **prophetic mission**: to spread the light of Divine consciousness to humanity. In this context, Muhammad was not just a *lonely mystic*, but a *spiritual reformer* who combined personal piety and social responsibility. He prayed at night, but during the day led the community, taught, decided cases, and even fought if necessary to uphold justice.

He fasted earnestly, but also ate and appreciated the pleasures of halal. He loved his family, joked with his wife, played with the children, and lovingly maintained social relationships. In all things, there seems to be a balance between **zuhd and syukr**—between simplicity and gratitude for the blessings of the world.

Spirituality That Blends With Life

In contrast to extreme asceticism which views the world as an illusion or shackle, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم Muhammadaffirmed that the world is a **field of charity**. He said:

"There is no rahbaniyyah (priestly/asceticism) in Islam."
(HR. Ahmad, Ibn Hibban)

That is, he rejected the path of purification through absolute seclusion. True purity for him is tested in social interactions: how one stays honest when trading, stays gentle when angry, remains patient when harmed, and stays dhikr in busyness. This is active spirituality—*dzikr fi al-'amal*—remembering Allah in the midst of work.

He said:

"Indeed, among you whom I love the most are the most virtuous, gentle, sociable and easy to get along with."
(Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Morality is the most manifest form of Islamic spirituality. It is not just a religious feeling in the heart, but an attitude that flows in action. Therefore, although the Prophet often woke up at night until his feet were swollen in prayer (HR. al-Bukhari), he also smiled at the people he met, helped the poor, and upheld justice for the oppressed.

A Realistic Zuhd, Not a Refugee

The Prophet Muhammad's spirituality did not reject the world, but rather put the world in its proportions. He lived a simple life—sleeping on a rough mat, eating dates and whole wheat bread—but did not consider poverty as a goal. In a hadith it is stated:

"Zuhd towards the world is not by forbidding what is lawful and wasting wealth, but by being more confident in what is in the sight of Allah than in what is in your hands."
(HR. Ahmad)

This is the key to his spirituality: **letting go of attachments, not abandoning life.** Zuhd does not mean running away from the world, but making the world a tool, not a goal.

The Path of Balance: Between the World and the Hereafter

Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم also taught a balance between worship and the rights of the body and family. When some of the companions intended not to marry, to continue fasting, and not to sleep at night for the sake of worship, he rebuked them firmly:

"By Allah, I am the most fearful and Allah-fearing person among you, but I fast and break the fast, I pray and I sleep, and I marry a woman. So whoever hates my sunnah, he is not of my group."
(Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim)

This hadith is a manifestation of the principle of the middle way that characterizes Islamic spirituality. The Prophet showed that spiritual perfection is not achieved by rejecting the world, but by regulating a balance between physical and spiritual needs.

Spirituality in Social Activities

As a head of state and community leader, the Prophet showed that involvement in world affairs does not hinder spiritual depth. On the battlefield, he continued to dhikr and ask for Allah's help. In political deliberations, he remained gentle and loving. In trading, he displayed extraordinary honesty to the nickname *al-Amīn*.

Even in household matters, he does not feel inferior to help. Aisyah r.a. narrated:

"The Messenger of Allah used to sew his own clothes, repair his sandals, and do the housework as one of you did."
(HR. Ahmad)

Thus, his spirituality is not exile, but **enlightenment that lives in society.**

Preliminary Conclusion

Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is an example of spirituality that **is embedded in the earth but directed towards the sky**. He was lonely not to flee, but to return with a clear heart; he fights not out of lust, but out of moral responsibility; he fasts to cleanse the soul, not to torture himself; And he has a family to channel affection which is also part of worship.

The spirituality of the Prophet Muhammad was *the spirituality of wasathiyyah*—the middle way that unites aspects of **tazkiyah (self-purification)** and **'umrān (social development).** In him, the world does not defile the soul, and the spirit does not flee from the world. That is why, he is mentioned in the Qur'an:

"And We did not send you (Muhammad) except as a blessing to the whole world."
(QS. al-Anbiyā': 107)

Part II: The Spiritual Practices of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم — The Spiritual Path That Blends with Life

1. Khalwah: Contemplation in Silence

Before the prophethood, the Prophet Muhammad was often alone in the Ḥirā' Cave. He brought enough provisions, and stayed there for a few nights, contemplating nature and life. In the narration of Aisyah r.a. it is stated:

كَانَ يَتَحَنَّثُ فِي غَارِ حِرَاءٍ، يَتَحَنَّثُ فِيهِ اللَّيَالِيَ ذَوَاتِ الْعَدَدِ
"He used to stay in the cave of Hira for several nights."
(Narrated by al-Bukhari, no. 3)

The word *tahannuts* means worship, dhikr, and shunning sin. In the spiritual traditions of the world, khalwah (solitude) is a means to calm the mind and purify the heart. But in Islam, the Prophet's khalwah does not end with an alienation, but with the **descent of revelation** — a command to return to the community and lead them.

Thus, his solitude is **active contemplation**, not flight. After descending from the Cave of Ḥirā', he immediately brought the message of monotheism and justice. This is where the uniqueness of Islamic spirituality lies: solitude is only the path to devotion.

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2. Qiyām al-Layl: Uniting with Allah in the Silence of the Night

After the prophethood, the Prophet maintained the habit of being lonely at night. He wakes up at night, prostrates himself for a long time, weeps in prayer, asks for mercy and guidance for his people. The Qur'an even commands:

قُمِ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا
"Get up (for prayer) at night, except a little."
(QS. al-Muzzammil [73]: 2)

Aisyah narrated:

"The Prophet ﷺ prayed at night until his legs were swollen. When asked why he did it when his sins had been forgiven, he replied: 'Don't I want to be a grateful servant?'"
(Narrated by al-Bukhari, no. 1130)

Night prayers were **the core of the Prophet's spiritual practice**. It is not just worship, but *muraqabah* — a deep awareness of God's presence. In the silence of the night, the Prophet purified his intentions, strengthened his love for the people, and cultivated spiritual energy to carry out a hard mission during the day.

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3. Fasting: Taming Lust, Not Self-Torture

The Prophet Muhammad fasted regularly, but not extremely. He forbade the practice of excessive fasting without a break, and even advised that the body be given its rights. In a hadith narrated by Abdullah bin Amr r.a.:

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to me: 'Do not fast every day, because your body has a right over you.'"
(Narrated by al-Bukhari, no. 1975)

However, he himself often fasted on Mondays and Thursdays, as well as three days of every month (HR. an-Nasa'i, no. 2358). When Ramadan arrives, fasting becomes a collective exercise for the ummah — not just to suppress hunger, but to cultivate social empathy and self-control.

He said:

"Fasting is a shield. So if one of you fasts, don't speak dirty and don't shout angry."
(Narrated by al-Bukhari, no. 1904)

Fasting in his teachings is not a form of physical asceticism, but a means to balance the **intellect, passions, and heart.**

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4. Dhikr and Divine Consciousness

The Prophet's spirituality culminated in dhikr — the constant awareness of the presence of Allah in every movement of life. He does not limit dhikr to rituals, but rather makes it the breath of life.

In a hadith narrated by Muslim:

"Your mouth should always be wet with remembrance of Allah."
(HR. at-Tirmidhi, no. 3375)

He dhikr after prayer, when traveling, before sleeping, even when working. It is in dhikr that the heart of the Prophet always lives, as he said:

"The parable of those who dhikr to Allah and those who do not dhikr are like the living and the dead."
(Narrated by al-Bukhari, no. 6407)

Dhikr for him is an exercise **in the awareness of being present before God** (*hudhur ma'a Allah*). Not just speech, but spiritual awareness that accompanies all activities.

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5. Zuhd and Simplicity of Life

Zuhd (askese) The Prophet was not a fugitive from the world, but an arrangement of relations with him. He lived a simple life, despite being in full power in Medina. In the narration of Umar bin Khattab:

"I went in to see the Prophet ﷺ, and I saw him lying on a rough mat, and the mat left a mark on the side of his body. So I cried."
The Messenger of Allah asked: *"Why are you crying, O Umar?"*
I replied: "O Messenger of Allah, kings live in luxury, while you are like this."
He replied: *"Are you not pleased that for them the world, and for us the Hereafter?"*
(Narrated by al-Bukhari, no. 4913)

The Prophet's Zuhd is **freedom from dependence**, not rejection of material. He enjoyed the pleasures of halal, but was never enslaved by it. That simplicity made his heart spacious, not shaken by loss, not enslaved by pleasure.

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6. Love and Compassion: The Highest Spiritual Manifestations

The peak of the Prophet's spirituality is love (*mahabbah*). He loved God with humility, loved the people with sacrifice, loved his family with tenderness. In a hadith it is stated:

"Not one of you believes until he loves his brother as himself."
(Narrated by al-Bukhari, no. 13)

He also said:

"Indeed, I was sent to do nothing but to perfect noble morals."
(HR. Ahmad, no. 8595)

In him, spirituality is not only about *makrifat* and *dhikr*, but also about **empathy, tenderness, and social justice.** This is the highest form of spiritual experience: when love for God is transformed into love for creatures.

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7. Jihad and Moral Fortitude: Spirituality in Action

One of the most often misunderstood aspects is the Prophet's involvement in wars. But war for him was not an impulse to power, but part of the moral responsibility to guard the truth. In every war, he rejected atrocities and upheld the ethics of war: not killing children, women, the elderly, or animals for no reason. (HR. Abu Dawud, no. 2614)

He also said:

"We have gone from a small jihad to a big jihad."
The Companions asked: "What is the great jihad?"
He replied: *"Jihad against lust."*
(HR. al-Baihaqi, *Shu'ab al-Iman*, no. 4761)

This hadith shows that the Prophet's spirituality did not stop at worship, but was incarnated in the courage to uphold justice and conquer the ego. True Jihad is a moral struggle—the submission of ego for the sake of truth.

8. Musyahadah: A Comprehensive Spiritual View

The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم lived with the full awareness that all life is the signs (āyāt) of Allah. When he saw nature, he prayed; when he received favors, he was grateful; when he was tested, he was patient.
He said:

"It is amazing what a believer is. All his affairs were good for him. If he gets a favor, he is grateful, it is good for him. If he gets calamity, he is patient, which is also good for him."
(HR. Muslim, no. 2999)

This is the highest fruit of spirituality: **the inner balance that gives birth to serenity and wisdom.**

Temporary Cover

The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم was not an ascetic who stayed away from the world, but **a spiritualist who purified the world with inner light.**
He showed that purity does not require caveats and absolute silence; it is enough to have a clear heart and sincere intentions in the midst of activity. In him, divine consciousness does not separate from humans, but rather draws closer to them.

So, as he said:

"Believers who associate with people and are patient with their disturbances are better than believers who do not associate and are impatient with their disturbances."
(HR. Ibn Majah, no. 4032)

This is an inclusive, realistic, and charity-oriented **form of Islamic spirituality**—where holiness does not mean leaving the world, but making it a mirror to see God in all things.

Part III: Muhammad and the Middle Way of World Spirituality

1. Introduction: The Three Great Axes of Spirituality

If we look at the history of human civilization, there are three major forms of spiritual paths that developed:

1. **The Ascetic Path** – away from the world, conquering lust and matter, like the Buddha and the Hindu ascetics.
2. **The Mystical-Natural Path** – one with nature, seeking cosmic harmony, as in Taoism.
3. **The Prophetic Monotheistic Path** – purifying the world through revelation and social charity, as represented by the Hebrew prophets and culminating in the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Each tradition is born out of a different context, but they all contain one common desire: **to find a balance between the mortal and the eternal.**
In this context, Muhammad's spirituality is not a repetition of previous traditions, but rather a **synthesis and correction** of two great extremes: flight from the world and worldly worship.

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2. Buddhist Spirituality: Release and Voidness

Buddha Gautama (Siddhartha) took the path of *renunciation* — leaving palaces, wealth, and even family, in search of freedom from suffering. The essence of his teaching, as summarized in the Four Noble Truths (*Cattāri Ariya Saccāni*), is that suffering comes from desire, and that freedom is attained by extinguishing that desire through the Middle Way (*Majjhima Paṭipadā*).

Buddhist spirituality is centered on **inner enlightenment** (bodhi) and detachment from the circle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*).
But in practice, this direction often leads to a **relaxation of social engagement**, because the ultimate goal is *nirvāṇa*—a state without desire and without attachment.

In comparison, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم Muhammad also taught self-control and the subjugation of lust, but did not reach the extinguishment of the desire for life. Islam views *nafs* not as an enemy that must be extinguished, but **as a force that needs to be purified and directed.**
In the Qur'an it is stated:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا
"Blessed is the one who purifies his soul." (QS. as-Shams [91]: 9)

So, if Buddha took the path of **letting go of desire**, Muhammad took the path **of purifying desire**. Both lead to liberation, but the first with the *uprooting of the root of passion*, the second with *purification and channeling the passions* in the direction of the sacred (e.g. in worship, family, and social charity).

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3. The Hindu Ṛṣi: The Path of Yoga and Tapasya

In the classical Hindu tradition, especially in the *Upaniṣad* teachings and *the Yoga* system, the ṛṣis (resī) seek union with *Brahman*, the supreme essence, through asceticism (*tapasya*) and long meditation. This path emphasizes release from worldly attachments and liberation (*mokṣa*).

Hermitsmen such as Yājñavalkya or Patanjali made the body and mind tools to transcend the empirical world.
However, many Hindu teachings place the world (prakṛti) as an illusion (*māyā*) that deceives human consciousness.

On the other hand, in Islam — as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم — the world is not an illusion, but a **creation that has a moral meaning and function.**
Allah said:

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا
"We did not create the heavens and the earth and those that are between them in vain." (QS. Ṣād [38]: 27)

The Prophet Muhammad did not teach escape from the world, but *tadbīr* (management) of the world. He regulates trade, establishes governments, and organizes societies — all the while keeping the heart from being bound by materialism.
In this way, he displays **integrative spirituality**: the world is not a barrier, but **a mirror through which to recognize God**.

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4. Taoism: Tranquility and the Flow of Nature

In the teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi, the core of spirituality is *wu wei* (無爲)—"without coercion," i.e. living in harmony with *the Dao*, the way of the universe.
Man is enlightened when he stops imposing his will on the world and allows himself to flow with the rhythm of the cosmos.

There are similarities between *wu wei* and the concept *of tawakkul* in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمtaught inner peace through surrender to the will of Allah.
He said:

"If you had put your trust in Allah truly, you would have been given sustenance like a bird is given sustenance: it goes out in the morning hungry and comes back in the evening in a state of satiety."
(HR. at-Tirmidhi, no. 2344)

But the difference is fundamental: *wu wei* is cosmological (harmony with nature), while *tawakkul* is theological (surrender to God's personal and transcendent will). If Taoism emphasizes *unity with nature*, then Islam emphasizes *servitude to the Creator of nature.*
In this case, the Prophet Muhammad displayed **an active spirituality** that surrendered the results to Allah, but still strives earnestly.

"Tie up your camel, and be confident."
(Narrated by Tirmidhi, no. 2517)

This hadith reflects the perfect balance between *wu wei* and *karma yoga*: humans still play a role, but without the attachment of results.

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5. The Islamic Middle Way: Between Relief and Diving

If we pull the red thread, then this comparison shows that:

Aspects	**Buddha**	**Ṛṣi Hindu**	**Taoism**	**Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم**
Purpose	Nirvāṇa (extinguishing desire)	Mokṣa (union with Brahman)	Harmony with Dao	Ma'rifah & ridha Allah
Attitude towards the world	Grief, must be abandoned	Māyā, the illusion that is surpassed	Nature as a teacher and stream	The world as a charity farm
How to achieve purity	Meditation, the release of desires	Yoga, tapasya	Wu Wei (without coercion)	Dhikr, worship, social charity
Relations with the community	Tend to be individual	Personal Asbestos	Naturalistic	Social and communal
Spirituality model	Contemplative-ecstatic	Transcendent asceticism	Cosmic-passive	Prophetic-active

From the table it appears that the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمwas **in the middle of all these** paths:

- He **meditated like a Buddha**, but did not leave society.
- He **did zuhud like ṛṣi**, but did not view the world as an illusion.
- He **was as calm as a Daoist**, but still acted actively and responsibly.

The Prophet's spirituality is a **living middle way** —not *monastic*, not *pantheistic*, but *prophetic-humanistic*: changing the world without losing its inner depth.

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6. Prophetic Spirituality: Spiritual and Social Synthesis

Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمwas not only an inner teacher, but also a social reformer. He taught that spiritual perfection is inseparable from social ethics. In the hadith it is mentioned:

"The believer whose faith is most perfect is the best in morals."
(HR. at-Tirmidhi, no. 1162)

Here, **morality becomes a concrete form of spirituality.**
In the Buddhist context, moral virtue (śīla) is the initial stage to inner liberation; in Islam, it is not just a stage, but the fruit of true faith.

Thus, the Prophet's spirituality was **inclusive and dynamic** —he did not shut himself off from the world, but channeled Divine love through justice, empathy, and service.

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7. The Prophet as a "Hermit in the Middle of the Market"

Historians and Sufis often describe the Prophet Muhammad as *a hermit who lived in the middle of the market*.
He was lonely at night to purify himself, and during the day he led, traded, settled matters, helped the poor, and even joked with his family. In this regard, he shows a balance between **zuhd and syukr**, **worship and muamalah**, **tasawuf and fiqh**.

Rumi, the great Sufi poet, once said:

"Muhammad did not flee from the world, but made him a mirror for Allah. He entered the world, but did not sink into it."

This is an active, conscious, and human spirituality—a spirituality that does not disconnect itself from the world, but lights the world with the pure light of the heart.

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8. Conclusion: The Prophet Muhammad as the Peak of Universal Spirituality

If the Buddha is the symbol of inner wisdom, the ṛṣi are the symbol of contemplation, and the taoists are the symbol of harmony, then Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمis a **synthesis entirely in an active prophetic form.**
He is:

- **A mystic** in the silence of the night,
- **A social reformer** in the community,

- **A just political leader** ,
- **A loving father and husband** .

In him, the way of the spirit and the way of the world are not contradictory—they meet in monotheism:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
"Say: Verily, my prayer, my worship, my life and my death are for Allah, the Lord of the worlds." (QS. al-An'ām [6]: 162)

This verse is the supreme statement of **integral spirituality** —that all existence, innate and inward, is worship.

Thus, the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم was not only the heir of the spiritual traditions of the past, but **the perfecter and enforcer of the eternal balance**:
between thought and dhikr, between love and duty, between the silence and
the hustle and bustle of the world.He is an example for modern humans who want to be holy without abandoning life—to be *a Sufi in the middle of the city, a herb in the market, and a servant on the throne of the world.*

9. Confucianism and Social Spirituality

a. The Moral Path as a Spiritual Path

In contrast to the Buddha who sought inner liberation and Laozi who sought cosmic harmony, **Kongzi (Confucius, 551–479 BC)** taught that human perfection is achieved through **moral obedience and social order.**
He does not emphasize self-purification through meditation or asceticism, but through true ethical relationships: between parent and child, ruler and citizen, husband and wife, friend and fellow man.

The basic principle is *ren (仁)* — humanity or compassion — which is embodied through *li (禮),* which is a harmonious manners and social order. In *Analects* 12:22, Confucius says:

"Ren is simple: love people." And in 15:23: "That which thou wilt not do unto thee, do not unto others."

That is, Confucian spirituality is not a mystical practice or solitude, but **an embodiment of virtue in social life** —a kind of *spirituality in morality*.

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b. Worldly Balance: Tian and the Middle Way

For Confucius, the moral order of man reflected the cosmic order established by *Tian* (Heaven).
To be a wise human means to live according to the will of Heaven, not by rejecting the world, but by **governing the world in a just and compassionate manner.**

Therefore, an important concept in Confucianism is *Zhongyong (中庸)* — the Middle Way or Balance. He teaches that man is not to be extreme: not too hard, not too soft, not to be drowned in lust, but also not to reject human nature. In *the Doctrine of the Mean* it is said:

"Perfection is balance; wisdom is an eternal middle way."

This concept is very close to the Islamic principle of *wasathiyyah* — balance and moderation. The Qur'an refers to Muslims as:

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا
"And thus We have made you a middle people." (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 143)

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c. Spirituality of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم Muhammad: Harmony between Faith and Sociality

If Confucius emphasized social morality as the pinnacle of spirituality, then the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمcombined that morality with **theological and inner dimensions.**
He emphasized that the perfection of faith is only manifested in morals:

"The believer whose faith is most perfect is the best in morals."
(HR. at-Tirmidhi, no. 1162)

However, the fundamental difference lies in the source of that morality.

- For Confucius, morality stemmed from the **order of the cosmos and human virtue**.
- For the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, morality comes from **faith in Allah**, the Creator of morality himself.

Thus, Islam adds a **dimension of transcendence** to social ethics:
doing good not only because of social harmony, but because of the awareness that every action is seen and judged by Allah.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالإِحْسَانِ
"Indeed, Allah commands justice and goodness." (QS. an-Naḥl [16]: 90)

Thus, the Prophet's spirituality is **theocentric** (God-centered) as well as **humanistic** (human-oriented).
The two are united in one principle:

"Not one of you believes until he loves his brother as himself."
(Narrated by al-Bukhari, no. 13)

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d. Comparison of Social Ethics of Confucius and the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم

Aspects	**Confucianism**	**Islam (Prophet صلى الله Muhammad عليه وسلم)**
Source of morality	*Tian* (Sky) and human wisdom	God and revelation
Spiritual purpose	Social harmony and moral perfection	The Pleasure of Allah and the Salvation of the Hereafter
The spiritual path	Social Ethics: *Ren* (Love), *Li* (Manners), *Yi* (Justice)	Faith, worship, and social morals
Attitude towards the world	The world as an arena of moral harmony	The world as a charity farm

Aspects	Confucianism	Islam (Prophet صلى الله Muhammad عليه وسلم)
Middle ground	*Zhongyong* (balance)	*Wasathiyyah* (moderation)
Praxis focus	Human relationships with others	Man's relationship with God and others

This comparison shows that **Confucius and the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم both rejected passive spirituality** that only dwelt in caves or monasteries.
Both view that human beings achieve perfection precisely **in the midst of society**, through ethics, responsibility, and compassion.

However, Islam provides a stronger metaphysical depth: morality is not just a social contract, but an **existential worship** of God.
That is why the Prophet said:

"Your smile to your brother is charity."
(HR. at-Tirmidhi, no. 1956)

This simple sentence bridges Confucius' social spirituality with Islam's theistic consciousness:
a smile—a small social action—can be worship, if done with the intention of God.

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e. Both Himself and Modern Man

In the busy and fragmented modern world, many people lose the balance between inner self and sociality.
Confucius offered **a harmonious social ethic**, while the Prophet Muhammad offered **a transcendent spiritual ethic**. Both can be an antidote to the crisis of modernity:

- From Confucius we learn social responsibility and good manners,
- From the Prophet Muhammad we learn that social good is only perfect if it is connected with divine intentions.

Thus, Islamic spirituality becomes **a social spirituality rooted in transcendence.**
He taught that taking **care of the family, upholding justice, and helping others** is a form of worship that is as high as prayer and dhikr, as long as it is done for the sake of Allah.

As the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

"The best human being is the most beneficial to other human beings."
(HR. Ahmad, no. 23499)

This is the Islamic version of Confucius — active humanity, love that begets charity.

Small Conclusion: The Two-Way Meeting

The spirituality of Confucius and the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمmet at one point:
both rejected selfish spirituality, and affirmed that true purity is full engagement in social life with a clean heart.

Difference

- Confucius established holiness through rational and traditional social morality,
- The Prophet Muhammad built holiness through social morality inspired by an awareness of a living and watching God.

Thus, if Buddha symbolizes inner liberation, Laozi symbolizes the harmony of nature, and Confucius symbolizes social order, then **Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is the synthesis point of all three:**

- He meditates like a sage,
- live in harmony like a Taoist,
- uphold social ethics like a Confucian,
- but linking everything in **monotheism** — the awareness of the Supreme as the source of all holiness.

Part IV: The Spirituality of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and Modern Man

1. Spirituality in the Middle of the World: A Synthesis of the Eastern Way

In the history of world spirituality, humans have taken three major paths in search of meaning:

1. **The contemplative path** — like the Buddha, who walks inner silence and worldly renunciation.
2. **The mystical-natural path** —like Laozi and the Taoists, that merge with the rhythm of the universe.
3. **The ethical-social path** — like Confucius, which purifies itself through the moral order of society.

However, the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم presented the **fourth path** — the path that **unites the three in monotheism.**

He was alone in the Cave of Hira like a hermit, but did not settle there. When revelation came down, he **descended back into society**: preaching, trading, building families, leading states, even waging wars—all with the same spiritual awareness as when he meditated.

That is the path **of active spirituality**, not *to flee from the world*, but to *purify the world through charity.*

The hadith confirms:

"There is no rahbaniyyah (clergy) in Islam."
(HR. Ahmad, no. 23145)

This sentence is not a rejection of godliness, but a correction to a form of spirituality that separates oneself from life. For the Prophet, true spirituality is a **divine presence in the midst of worldly activities.**

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2. Spirituality of Balance (al-Wasathiyyah)

The concept *of wasathiyyah* (moderation) is not just social or political; it is the **spiritual foundation of Islam.**
The Prophet taught that extremes in religion actually distance themselves from God.

"Woe to those who transgress in religion."
(HR. Muslim, no. 2670)

He therefore lives in perfect balance:

- He **fasted** but also **broke the fast**.
- He prayed **at night** but also **slept and rested**.
- He **was lonely at night**, but **he taught, upheld justice, and led** by day.
- He **cries in prayer**, but also **smiles in the market and jokes with small children.**

In one hadith, it is mentioned that when some of the companions wanted to fast continuously, pray without sleep, and stay away from women, he said:

"I fast and break the fast, I pray and sleep, I marry a woman; Whoever hates my sunnah, he is not of my group."
(Narrated by al-Bukhari, no. 5063)

This hadith is the **spiritual manifesto of Islam**:
purity does not mean abandoning human nature, but **living that nature with Divine consciousness.**

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3. Spirituality in Responsibility

Unlike the Indian or Chinese ascetics who sought perfection by stepping away from the world, the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمshowed that **social responsibility is part of worship.**

He said:

"It is enough of sin for a man if he wastes the person he is dependent on."
(HR. Abu Dawud, no. 1692)

And in another hadith:

"The best you are the best to his family."
(HR. at-Tirmidhi, no. 3895)

His spirituality did not stop at the mihrab, but extended to the kitchen, the market, and the battlefield.
Every space of life becomes a place to encounter God — *ihsan* in the most practical sense:

"You worship God as if you saw Him; if you do not see Him, then He does see you."
(HR. Muslim, no. 8)

It is the inner consciousness that transforms worldly work into holy charity. In this framework, working, providing for the family, and upholding justice are not secular activities—they are all *worship* if intentional for God's sake.

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4. Spirituality as Universal Grace

The Prophet's spirituality is not only a path of self-purification, but also **a source of grace for all beings.**
The Qur'an affirms:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ
"And We did not send you except as a blessing to all the worlds." (QS. al-Anbiyā' [21]: 107)

This grace is not limited to believing man, but also to those who do not yet know him—even to animals and nature.

In the hadith, it is stated that he forbids torturing animals, cutting down trees for no reason, and even reprimanding friends who separate the chicks from their mothers.

"Whoever does not love will not be loved."
(Narrated by al-Bukhari, no. 5997)

The Prophet's spirituality is an **ecology of love**, in which man's relationship with nature, others, and God is restored in a single consciousness of grace. This made him not only a religious teacher, but also **a reformer of universal spirituality** —a *monotheistic bodhisattva*, who rejected the world not by abandoning it, but by loving it.

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5. Spirituality and Inner Freedom

In the modern world, humans are often caught up in externalities—productivity, consumption, and imaging.
But the Prophet showed a different form of inner freedom: **zuhd** — not rejecting the world, but *dominating the world without being enslaved by it.*

He lived a simple life even though he was able to have abundance. In the hadith it is mentioned:

"His bed was just a rough mat that left marks on his back."
(Narrated by al-Bukhari, no. 4913)

However, he did not reject the enjoyment of halal.
He enjoyed honey, mutton, and fragrance — but without attachment. This shows that Islamic spirituality is not an escape from the world, but the **mastery of the world with a calm heart.**

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6. Relevance for Modern Humans

The spirituality of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلمhas become very relevant in the contemporary world because it offers three great balances that are missing in the modern century:

1. **Balance between mind and birth.**
   The modern world emphasizes innate activity, while ancient Eastern traditions emphasize the mind. The Prophet brought the two together in concrete worship — dhikr accompanied by charity.

2. **Balance between the individual and the social.**
   Modernity emphasizes individualism, while some older systems emphasize social

compliance. The Prophet taught *ukhuwah* and *social responsibility* without negating personal freedom.

3. **Balance between this world and the hereafter.**
   Capitalism satisfies the world, while some spirituality rejects the world. The Prophet taught that the world is a field of the hereafter—a place where the seeds of charity and love are planted.

The Qur'an affirms:

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا
"Seek with what Allah has bestowed upon you the happiness of the Hereafter, but do not forget your portion in this world." (QS. al-Qaṣaṣ [28]: 77)

This verse is at the heart *of Islam's moderate spirituality* — a teaching that allows man to become a businessman, artist, scientist, or leader without losing his spiritual direction.

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7. Conclusion: The Prophet as the Architect of Balance Spirituality

If we read the entire spiritual tradition of the world as a map of man's search for meaning, then the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم Muhammadis the **meeting point of the whole path.**

Tradition	**Spiritual Focus**	**Attitude towards the World**	**The Path of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم**
Buddha	Inner liberation	Rejecting the world	Purification of the world with intention and charity
Taoism	Harmony of nature	Blending in with nature	Uniting with the will of Allah
Confucianism	Social morality	Community order	Social morality with theistic intentions
Islam (Prophet)	Tauhid & Balance	The world as a trust	Middle way: world and the hereafter, inner and social

Thus, the Prophet was not only a theological prophet, but also **a universal spiritualist** who guided man to attain enlightenment in worldly activities.
He bridged caves and markets, prayer and diplomacy, night and day, dhikr and struggle.

In him, **the hermit's soul meets the warrior's soul**, **silence meets courage**, **contemplation meets social love.**
That is why Islam is not a monastery religion, but a **religion of balance and life.**

Part V: The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمas the Archetype of the Complete Human Being (al-Insān al-Kāmil)

1. Meaning of al-Insān al-Kāmil

The concept *of al-Insān al-Kāmil* ("The Perfect Man") appears strongly in philosophical Sufism, especially in the work **of Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240 AD)** and later developed by **'Abd al-Karim al-Jili (d. 1428 AD).**

It is not only a mystical idea, but also an existential theology that explains the position of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم in the spiritual cosmos of man.

According to Ibn 'Arabi, the perfect human being is a mirror of God in the universe:

"Al-Insān al-Kāmil huwa al-mir'ātu allati tajalla fīhā al-Ḥaqq."
"The perfect man is the mirror in which God appears to himself." (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, II/123)

That is, perfect man is not God, but a *perfect reflection* of His attributes.
It is the **bridge between heaven and earth**, between the Divine form and human reality.

In the view of the Sufis, **the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم** is the highest form of *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, as he integrates:

- The Divine Consciousness (Ma'rifah),
- rational wisdom ('aql),
- and social charity ('amal).

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2. The Prophet as a Divine Mirror

This concept is in line with the words of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the hadith qudsi:

"I am a hidden treasure, I want to be known, so I created creatures so that they may know me."
(Although the status of this hadith sanad is disputed, its meaning is widely quoted in Sufism literature.)

In that framework, the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is seen as the **peak of human consciousness** who managed to know God completely without losing his human side.
He does not dissolve in mystical ecstasy to forget the world, but **revives divine consciousness in the reality of the world.**

Al-Ghazali (d. 1111 A.D.) in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn* describes the Prophet as a model of spiritual and moral perfection:

"There is no human being who achieves a balance between intellect, passion, and spirit like the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم." (*Ihyā'*, Kitāb Riyāḍat an-Nafs)

This perfection is not because of biological extravaganza, but because he **aligns all of man's potential—ratio, heart, and will— with God.**

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3. The Structure of the Complete Spirituality

The Sufis then described *al-Insān al-Kāmil* with three major axes:

Dimension	Information	The Prophet as an Example
Reason ('Aql)	Ability to understand, weigh and organize the world	He used reason in strategy, politics, and law, but was always bound by revelation

Dimension	Information	The Prophet as an Example
Heart (Qalb)	The center of taste, love, and intuition	He is loving, gentle, and empathetic even to enemies
Ruh (Rūḥ)	Direct connection with God	He has the highest *ma'rifah* — constant awareness of the presence of Allah

Perfection arises when those three dimensions work in harmony. If the mind without a heart → dry and rationalistic;
if the heart is mindless → sentimental and undirected;
If the soul without both → float without charity. The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمunited the three in a balanced manner.

That is what Ibn 'Arabi meant when he referred to the Prophet as **"al-Qutb al-A'ẓam"** — the supreme spiritual axis that arranges the entire cosmic and human balance.

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4. The Prophet as a Model of Human Nature

In the Qur'an, man is said to be created in "fitrah" — the original pattern of purity and balance:

فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا
"The nature of Allah who has created man according to him." (QS. ar-Rūm [30]: 30)

The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمwas not only the recipient of revelation, but **the living manifestation of the fitrah.**
He showed that humans can live in a worldly way without losing spirituality.
He ate, married, led, and fought — but all in the orbit of monotheism.

In the view of Islamic existential philosophy (e.g. *Mulla Sadra*), this means that the Prophet attained the highest "actuality of existence" (*kamāl al-wujūd*).
He did not erase his humanity, but **perfected it through divine consciousness.**

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5. Fullness of Spirituality vs. Partial Spirituality

If we compare it with other traditions:

Tradition	The Shape of Perfection	Nature of Spirituality
Buddha	Nirvana — free from desire	Contemplative and nihilistic (detachment from the world)
Hindu	Moksha — the union of the Atman with Brahman	Metaphysical and mystical
Tao	Blending with the Tao	Naturalistic and intuitive
Confucius	Ren and Li — social harmony	Ethical and social

Tradition	The Shape of Perfection	Nature of Spirituality
Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم	Tauhid and Saleh Charity	Integrative: inner and innate, personal and social

Thus, the Prophet's spirituality is **an integrative and realistic** form:
he does not erase the world like the Buddha, does not obscure the personality in the Tao, and does not stop at social morality like Confucius.
It brings man to a point of existential equilibrium — to become **a "conscious servant" (ʿabd syakūr)** as well as **a "representative of God on earth" (khalīfah fīl-arḍ).**

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6. Philosophical Reflection: The Prophet as a Symbol of Synthesis

In Islamic philosophy, the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is seen as the **culmination of the synthesis between intellect-philosophy and revelation-spirituality.**

- **Philosophers** such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina describe the Prophet as a human being with the highest active intellect, who received direct knowledge from *ʿAql al-Faʿʿāl* (universal active intellect).
- **The Sufis** added that in addition to rational knowledge, the Prophet also received *dzauq* (inner sense) and *wahy* (divine inspiration).

Thus, the Prophet became **an epistemological model** for all human ways of knowing the truth:

- Through the use of rationality,
- through the heart (spirituality),
- and through charity (ethics).

Al-Jili wrote in *al-Insān al-Kāmil fī Ma'rifat al-Awākhir wa al-Awā'il*:

"Muhammad is a perfect man because in him are gathered all the essence of being: divine, cosmic, and human." (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*, I/5)

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7. The Dimension of Love: The Affective Spirituality of the Prophet

The perfection of the Prophet also lies in the dimension of his love. For Sufis, love is the path to perfection, because love removes the ego and reveals the face of God in fellow beings.

The Prophet said:

"A man's faith is not complete until he loves his brother as he loves himself."
(Narrated by al-Bukhari, no. 13)

And he also prayed:

"O Allah, make me love You more than my love for myself, my family, and the cool water on a hot day."
(Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, no. 3490)

In this kind of love, spirituality is not just a moral discipline, but *a transformation of feeling.*
Love of God radiates into love for neighbor — like the sun shining without choosing.

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8. The Perfect Man in Us

The concept *of al-Insān al-Kāmil* is not only a description of the Prophet, but also **a roadmap for humans.**
Every human being has a "prophetic spark"—the potential to know, love, and do good in the divine consciousness.

Ibn 'Arabi said:

"In every man there is a part of the prophethood, insofar as he knows God through himself." (*Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, Bab Adam)

So Islamic spirituality is not a personal cult of the Prophet, but **imitates its structure.**
We cannot be Muhammad, but we can *walk towards Muhammadhood* — that is, to be a balanced human being who unites knowledge, love, and charity.

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9. Conclusion: The Prophet as a Mirror of Himself and the Way Home

In the end, **the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمis the pinnacle symbol of man's search for meaning.**
He was not only a teacher of law, but also *an architect of the spirituality of balance*, who brought together:

- The Silence of the Buddha,
- the tenderness of the Tao,
- the virtues of Confucius,
- and the absolute oneness of God.

In him, spirituality ceased to be an escape—and turned into a **call to return to oneself, to God, and to the world with an enlightened heart.**

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ
"Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah there is a beautiful example." (QS. al-Aḥzāb [33]: 21)

Thus, the Prophet's path is the **path of universal balance**:
one with God without losing the world, loving the world without forgetting God.

5. Social Spirituality: The Prophet Muhammad and Confucius

In the history of Eastern thought, **Confucius (Kongzi)** is often seen as a symbol of **social spirituality**—that is, an approach to inner life and moral values that is not centered on withdrawal from the world, but rather on **manners, social relations, and the balance of state life**. Interestingly, this approach has strong resonances with the **prophetic path of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم**, who was not only a mystic and a loner, but also a social leader, father, educator, judge, and statesman.

a. Similarities in the Principles of Moderation and Relational Ethics

Confucius emphasized **Zhongyong (中庸)** — the doctrine of the middle way, which is a balance between two extremes, both in emotions, actions, and moral decisions. This teaching is very close to **the concept of wasathiyah** in Islam, as Allah says:

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا
"And thus We have made you a middle people."
(QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 143)

The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم taught the same through his life of rejecting extremities. In a hadith it is stated:

خَيْرُ الأُمُورِ أَوْسَطُهَا
"The best thing is the middle."
(Narrated by al-Bayhaqī, Syu'ab al-Īmān)

For Confucius, virtue arises when one **maintains harmony in social relationships**, while for the Prophet Muhammad, virtue grows from **the harmony between the mind connected to God and charity that spreads mercy to fellow human beings.**
This is a spirituality that is not only concerned with "self-purity", but also "the well-being of the world".

b. Spirituality of Involvement

Both the Prophet Muhammad and Confucius rejected the idea that holiness could only be achieved by **leaving the world**. Both view that **being human means living in the midst of other human beings** and carrying out social roles with honesty and compassion.

Confucius said:

"A *Junzi* (noble man) lives in the midst of society, he does not seek perfection in the mountains, but in human relationships."
(Analects, IV:5)

While the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

الْمُؤْمِنُ الَّذِي يُخَالِطُ النَّاسَ وَيَصْبِرُ عَلَى أَذَاهُمْ خَيْرٌ مِرّ نَ الَّذِي لَا يُخَالِطُهُمْ وَلَا يَصْبِرُ عَلَى أَذَاهُمْ
"A believer who gets along with people and is patient with their troubles is better than a sociable and impatient."
(HR. Ibn Mājah, no. 4032)

This hadith shows that spirituality in Islam is the **spirituality of engagement** — finding Allah in the hustle and bustle of life, not just in the solitude of a cave.

c. Spirituality as a Social Responsibility

For the Prophet Muhammad, a spiritual experience (e.g. when alone in the Hira Cave) was not an escape, but a **call to action in the community**. After the first revelation, he did not return to live alone, but **brought the message of justice and compassion to the marketplace, to the home, to the battlefield, and to the government**.
This is a form of **social spirituality** —the union between contemplation and action.

Similarly, Confucius viewed that personal virtue (*ren*, 仁) should be realized through a just social structure (*li*, 礼).
Thus, **ethics and spirituality are never separated from the order of society**.

d. Comparative Conclusion

Aspects	**Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم**	**Confucius**
Spiritual purpose	Perfection of faith through worship and social morals	Moral perfection through social relations and virtue
Method	Worship, da'wah, jihad, social service	Education, moral example, social rituals
Attitude towards the world	The world as a field of charity towards the hereafter	The world as a moral space for the formation of virtue
Moderation	*Ummatan wasathan* (middle people)	*Zhongyong* (doctrine of the middle way)
The Essence of Spirituality	Connecting with God and man	Maintaining harmony between people and the social order

Both affirm that **true spirituality is not an escape from the world, but rather a full engagement with inner awareness**.

6. Balance of Action and Silence: The Spirituality of the Prophet Muhammad and Laozi (Taoism)

If Confucius symbolizes **active social spirituality**, then **Laozi** (Lao Tzu) symbolizes **natural and passive spirituality** — *wu wei* (无为), i.e., action without coercion, wisdom that arises from alignment with *the Tao*, the cosmic path that is invisible but flows in all things.
Interestingly, the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمpresents a **unique synthesis** between the two: he was as active in the social and political world as Confucius, but with a natural depth of mind and balance that was in line with the spirit of Taoism.

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a. *Wu Wei* and *Tawakkul*: Similarities in Active Resignation

Wu Wei*'s teachings* are often misunderstood as not acting at all, when the meaning is to **act without ego**, following the natural flow of truth. Laozi said in *Dao De Jing*:

"The wise man does not seek to dominate the world;
he went with the flow, and the world became organized by itself."
(Dao De Jing, Chapter 29)

This concept finds its equivalent in Islam through **tawakkul** — relying completely on Allah after earnest effort. The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمsaid:

اعْقِلْهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ
"Bind (your camel) and trust (in Allah)."
(HR. al-Tirmidzī, no. 2517)

This hadith describes a balance between **effort and surrender**, between **action and silence** — exactly like the *wu wei principle*, actions that are in harmony with the Divine order without being filled with ego or personal desires.

b. Simple Living and Harmony of Nature

Laozi taught that the path to peace is to **return to simplicity and nature**, abandoning greed and artificial life.
Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم lived a very simple life despite having great power. Aisyah ra. narrate:

مَا شَبِعَ آلُ مُحَمَّدٍ مِنْ خُبْزِ الشَّعِيرِ يَوْمَيْنِ مُتَتَابِ عَيْنِ حَتَّى قُبِضَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم
"Muhammad's family never got enough of wheat bread two days in a row until he died."
(HR. al-Bukhārī, no. 5416)

He lives in harmony with fitrah — eating enough, sleeping enough, speaking as well as necessary — as well as the principles of Taoism that advocate harmony with the laws of nature.
While some Eastern ascetics sought immortality by leaving the world, the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم actually showed that **living a natural and balanced life is the highest form of spirituality**.

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c. Silence in the Middle of the World: *Khalwah* and "Serenity in Motion"

Laozi described the sages as "the still waters, but the whole valley gives life."
Similarly the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم — he used to be lonely at night, doing dhikr, praying long until his feet were swollen, but during the day he traded, educated, waged, and deliberated with companions.

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Surely إِنَّ لِرَبِّكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَلِنَفْسِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَلِأَ□ل
your Lord has a right over you, you have a right over you, and your family has a right over you. So give to each one his right."
(HR. al-Bukhārī, no. 1968)

This hadith illustrates the balance between **inner spirituality (khalwah)** and **worldly responsibility (mu'āmalah)** — a principle that is almost identical to that of *Confucius' zhongyong* (middle way) and *wu wei* Laozi.
However, what distinguishes the Prophet is that his silence **always results in social action**; he does not stop at contemplation, but makes it a source of power to improve the world.

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d. Prophet Muhammad as the Manifestation of "Tao in Man"

From a philosophical perspective, *the Tao* is the cosmic principle that is the source and direction of all that exists—intangible, nameless, but real in all forms of harmony. In the Islamic view, the same function is carried out by **the sentence monotheism**, which is the awareness of Allah as the origin and purpose of all existence:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
"Verily we belong to Allah, and to Him we return."
(QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 156)

The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم was a human being who **flowed in the Divine will**, not against it. He presents the "*Tao of Islam*" — the Divine path that comes from revelation, not mere intuition.
The difference is that Laozi seeks his way through nature and inner intuition, while the Prophet Muhammad travels through **God's objective revelation and guidance**.

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e. Comparative Conclusion

Aspects	**Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم**	**Laozi (Taoism)**
Source of spirituality	Revelation and awareness of tauhid	Tao (path of the universe)
Philosophy of action	Ikhtiar + tawakkul (effort in accordance with the will of Allah)	*Wu Wei* (acting without ego coercion)
Lifestyle	Simple, natural, balanced	Simple, one with nature
Inner purpose	The Pleasure of Allah and the Balance of the Hereafter	Harmony with the Tao and inner peace
World-mind relationship	Quiet at night, active during the day	Total silence, minimal social involvement
Characteristics of spirituality	Balance between khalwah and social jihad	Withdrawal from the hustle and bustle of the world

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Thus, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم Muhammadpresented a **model of integral spirituality** — combining mystical depths like Laozi, social wisdom like Confucius, and ethical awareness like Buddha.
He **did not leave the world to attain God**, but **to present God in the midst of the world**.

7. The Prophetic Middle Way: A Synthesis of Eastern Spirituality in the Person of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم

After looking at the comparison of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم with the three main figures of Eastern spirituality—**Buddha**, **Confucius**, and **Laozi**—we can conclude that he presents the **most balanced and universal synthesis** of the three. If Buddha taught inner **enlightenment**, Confucius **social balance**, and Laozi **cosmic harmony**, then the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم placed everything within **the framework of monotheism**, which is the unity between God, man, and nature.

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a. The Middle Way: The Meeting Point Between Asceticism and Activism

The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم lived in a balance between **two extremes that often ensnare spiritual people**: flight from the world and attachment to the world.

- He **did dhikr and fasted**, but did not refuse to eat, sleep, and have a family.

- He **is lonely at night**, but **rests during the day**.
- He **fought when necessary**, but **rejected violence without cause**.
- He **received revelation**, but continued to think, dialogue, and strategize like an ordinary human being.

In a sahih hadith it is stated:

إِنِّي أَصُومُ وَأُفْطِرُ، وَأُصَلِّي وَأَرْقُدُ، وَأَتَزَوَّجُ النِّسَاءَ، فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنْ سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي
"I fast and if, I pray and sleep, I marry a woman; Whoever hates my sunnah, he is not of my group."
(HR. al-Bukhārī, no. 5063; Muslim, no. 1401)

This hadith emphasizes **a human spirituality**, which does not reject physical needs, but submits them under spiritual guidance.
Thus, the Prophet offered not only a middle way between spiritual and worldly extremities, but also a **middle way between mysticism, morality, and rationality**.

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b. The Path of Enlightenment: Integration Between Zikir and Charity

If the Buddha sought enlightenment through self-contemplation, then the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمattained enlightenment through **revelation that encouraged social action**.
Every time he prayed, the result was not just inner peace, but social **and moral responsibility** towards humanity.
For example, after the first revelation of "*Iqra'*", he did not return to solitude, but began **spiritual and social ethical reforms**.

Muhammad's spirituality is a **moving remembrance**—not a silence in silence, but a movement to uphold justice, help the weak, and beautify the world with compassion.

مَنْ لَا يَرْحَمُ لَا يُرْحَمُ
"He who does not love, will not be loved."
(HR. al-Bukhārī, no. 5997; Muslim, no. 2318)

Thus, dhikr does not stop at the lips or in the heart, but **becomes a source of social ethics and human empathy**.

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c. The Path of Wisdom: Uniting the Mind, Heart, and Charity

In the Prophet's view, wisdom (*ḥikmah*) is not just the result of contemplation as in Taoism or Buddhism, but the **fruit of obedience to Allah and the control of lust**. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

رَأْسُ الْحِكْمَةِ مَخَافَةُ اللَّهِ
"The tree of wisdom is the fear of Allah."
(Narrated by al-Bayhaqī, Syu'ab al-Īmān)

In contrast to Laozi's wisdom rooted in natural harmony, or Confucian's virtue rooted in social tradition, Muhammad's wisdom is rooted in **the awareness of monotheism** —the view that all aspects of life are manifestations of a vertical relationship with God and a horizontal relationship with fellow beings.

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d. The Cosmic Path: Natural Consciousness and the Unity of Creation

In some hadiths, the Prophet shows a very profound cosmic outlook, as if seeing the whole universe as a mirror of the Divine presence:

إِنِّي أَعْرِفُ حَجَرًا بِمَكَّةَ كَانَ يُسَلِّمُ عَلَيَّ قَبْلَ أَنْ أُبْعَثَ
"I know a stone in Mecca that used to greet me before I was sent."
(HR. Muslim, no. 2277)

This view shows ecological **and spiritual awareness**: that all creation has a spirit of submission (*tasbih*) to Allah.

وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ
"There is nothing but praising Him, but you do not understand their rosary."
(QS. al-Isrā' [17]: 44)

Thus, the spirituality of the Prophet Muhammad was not only social and inward, but also **cosmic**, encompassing the whole of creation—an idea that is also central to Taoism, but in Islam is based on theological, not pantheistic, consciousness.

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e. The Path of Love: The Spirituality of Grace

If Buddha emphasized *karuṇā* (compassion) and Laozi emphasized *ci* (gentleness), then the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمmade **rahmah (compassion)** the heart of all spirituality.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ
"And We did not send you (Muhammad), but as a blessing to the whole world."
(QS. al-Anbiyā' [21]: 107)

He loved not only humans, but also animals, nature, and even his enemies. In a hadith narrated by Abu Dawud, he once reprimanded a companion who took a bird chick from its mother:

مَنْ فَجَعَ هَذِهِ بِوَلَدِهَا؟ رُدُّوا وَلَدَهَا إِلَيْهَا
"Who made this bird sad because of its cub? Give the child back to him."
(HR. Abu Dāwūd, no. 5268)

Rahmah is not just a feeling, but a cosmic principle that binds the entire spirituality of Muhammad. It is a **form of active love that spreads life**, not just passive empathy.

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f. Conclusion: The "Prophetic Middle Way" as a Model of Universal Spirituality

Aspects of Eastern Spirituality	**Key Principles**	**Synthesis of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم**
Buddhism (India)	Liberation from lust and suffering	Control of lust without rejecting the world
Confucius (China)	Moral and social balance	Social ethics based on tauhid

Aspects of Eastern Spirituality	Key Principles	Synthesis of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم
Laozi (Taoism)	Harmony with Tao and nature	Inner balance and tawakkul to Allah
Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم	The Prophetic Middle Way	Inner, social, cosmic, and divine integration

The spirituality of Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمis a **holistic spirituality** — not just about meditation, not just about social morality, and not just about harmony with nature.
He brings them all together in one center: **monotheism**, the realization that all reality is rooted in one Supreme God.

8. The Relevance of the Prophetic Middle Way for Modern Man

(Closing Reflection)

In a modern world filled with noise, speed, and fragmentation, humans are often tossed between two extreme poles: **meaningless materialism** and **directionless spiritualism**. Some dissolve in exhausting worldly pursuits, while others escape into inner space without social contribution. This is where the **Prophetic Middle Way** inherited by the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلمpresents a **map of existential balance** for the people of this century.

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a. Between the Digital World and Inner Silence

Modern times require humans to always be "connected", but paradoxically the soul is increasingly **disconnected** — from oneself, from others, and from God.In this context, the lifestyle of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which balances **khalwah (inner silence)** with **khidmah (social service)** becomes a very relevant model.

He taught that silence **does not have to be in the mountains**, but can be found in the middle of markets, homes, and workplaces — as long as the heart is awakened by remembrance.
As he said:

لَيْسَ الشَّدِيدُ بِالصُّرَعَةِ، إِنَّمَا الشَّدِيدُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ
"A strong person is not the one who wins in wrestling, but the one who is able to control himself when angry."
(HR. al-Bukhārī, no. 6114; Muslim, no. 2609)

Self-control in the midst of the digital frenzy is a form of modern *nafs jihad*. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلمexemplified that **spiritual strength is not in running from the world**, but in **mastering oneself while in it**.

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b. Crisis of Meaning and Humane Way of Worship

Many modern spirituality seekers try to emulate Eastern practices: yoga, meditation, *mindfulness*, or digital detox. However, often the practice loses its **divine dimension**, turning into mere psychological therapy. The prophetic path offers a deeper *mindfulness*: **an inner awareness that is connected to God**, not just directionless silence.

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

تَعَرَّفْ إِلَى اللَّهِ فِي الرَّخَاءِ يَعْرِفْكَ فِي الشِّدَّةِ
"Know Allah in your free time, and He will know you in your short time."
(HR. al-Tirmidzī, no. 2516)

That is, spirituality is not an escape from adversity, but an **inner preparation to remain calm when the storm comes**.
This is the missing balance of many modern systems—a spirituality that is not alien to the world, but also not dominated by it.

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c. Active Spirituality: From Meditation to Action

Buddha taught compassion, Confucius taught social ethics, and Laozi taught harmony with nature—all of noble value, but often end up as **moral values separate from real life**. The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم actually turned spirituality into **the energy of civilization**:

- Remembrance gives birth to moral strength,
- Fasting breeds social empathy,
- Prayer gives birth to discipline and order,
- Alms give birth to solidarity and love.

In his view, worship does not stop at the mihrab, but flows to the market, home, and community. Spirituality is not a place to hide, but rather a **resource to build a just, beautiful, and graceful life**.

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d. Emotional Balance in the Era of Mental Fatigue

The modern world encourages humans to be relentlessly productive, resulting in the phenomenon of "burnout" — emotional and existential exhaustion. The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم gave an example of how **rest and worship become a rhythmic unit** that balances the soul and body.
He said to the companions who worship excessively:

إِنَّ لِبَدَنِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَلِرَبِّكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَلِأَهْلِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا
"Your body has a right over you, your Lord has a right over you, your family has a right to you."
(HR. al-Bukhārī, no. 1968)

This is healthy spirituality — not killing the body to liberate the soul, but **nourishing both to submit equally to God.**

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e. The Universal Path: Spirituality for All

The prophetic path is not just for scholars, Sufis, or ascetics; it is open to every human being—merchants, artists, housewives, students, and even leaders of the state.
Every act that is intended for the sake of Allah, done with honesty and balance, **becomes worship**.
As the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

إِنَّمَا الأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ
"Indeed, every deed depends on its intention."
(HR. al-Bukhārī, no. 1; Muslim, no. 1907)

With this principle, every work can be a path to God—as long as it is done with inner awareness and social ethics.
This is the **spirituality of work**, **family spirituality**, and **daily spirituality**, which goes beyond formal worship spaces.

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f. Reflective Conclusion: Becoming a Whole Human

The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم showed that holiness does not mean leaving the world, but making **the world a field of worship**.
He presents a balance between:

- **Buddha** who conquered lust,
- **Confucius** who organized social relations,
- **Laozi** is one with nature,
  but adds **monotheistic consciousness** as the center of all spiritual experiences.

In the midst of an age of meaninglessness, his path offers **a realistic, scientific, and universal spirituality** — a middle ground that anyone can take: work without greed, pray without fanaticism, and love without limits.

The "Prophetic Middle Way" is not just a way of life; it is a way of seeing the world—that God is present in every second of life, in work and silence, in laughter and weeping, in markets and mihrab.

Well, I will add the section "Jihad and the Spirituality of War in Islam" as a separate chapter (Chapter 8) in the main text, so that the discussion stands intact, comparative, and can be used as a separate subtheme in the journal version of the article.

Here's the integrative version — Chapter 8 (complete and already academically connected to the previous structure):

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8. Jihad and the Spirituality of War in Islam

In the history of world spirituality, warfare is often seen as the antithesis of holiness. Buddha rejected violence through *ahimsa*, Confucius emphasized social harmony, and Laozi advocated non-intervention. However, in Islam, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم Muhammadactually showed that war, when lived with moral and spiritual awareness, can be a path to self-purification.
War in Islam is not an expression of aggression, but a test of sincerity, moral perfection, and proof of self-control.

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a. The Meaning of Jihad: Between Birth and Mind

Etymologically, *jihad* means *al-juhd* — exerting one's full potential. In the sense of shari'i, jihad has two sides: innate jihad (physical struggle against tyranny) and inner jihad (against lust).

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said after returning from the battlefield:

رَجَعْنَا مِنَ الجِهَادِ الأَصْغَرِ إِلَى الجِهَادِ الأَكْبَرِ
"We have returned from a small jihad to a big jihad." They asked, "What is the great jihad, O Messenger of Allah?"
He replied, "Jihad against lust."
(Narrated by al-Bayhaqī in al-Zuhd al-Kabīr, no. 373)

This statement shows that physical warfare is only an outward symbol of inner struggle, and that true victory is self-conquest. Within this framework, jihad becomes a spiritual discipline, not just a military action.

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b. War Ethics and Self-Control

In prophetic history, wars were waged not to conquer, but to uphold justice and protect human dignity. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم established strict ethical principles:

لَا تَقْتُلُوا وَلِيدًا وَلَا امْرَأَةً وَلَا شَيْخًا فَانِيًا
"Do not kill vulnerable children, women, and the elderly."
(HR. Abu Dāwūd, no. 2614)

He also forbade the burning of houses, the destruction of crops, or the torture of enemies who had surrendered.
That is, jihad is not a destructive act, but rather the ultimate moral test — how to remain humane in the midst of violence.

This affirms the spiritual dimension of war: self-control takes precedence over physical victory.
As he said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ
"Indeed, Allah loves those who are just."
(QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 9)

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c. War as an Exercise in Zuhd and Sincerity

In *the Bhagavad Gītā*, Arjuna is taught by Kṛṣṇa that war can be the path to liberation if it is done without personal desires.
This concept is similar to jihad in Islam: war intended for Allah becomes worship, while war for ego becomes sin.

مَنْ قَاتَلَ لِيَكُونَ كَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا فَهُوَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
"Whoever fights so that the word of Allah may be supreme, he is the one who fights in the way of Allah."
(HR. al-Bukhārī, no. 123; Muslim, no. 1904)

In this sense, jihad is a form of *active zuhd*: sacrificing oneself and one's property for the sake of truth. The Qur'anic verse affirms:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُم بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ
"Indeed, Allah has bought from the believers themselves and their wealth with Paradise in return."
(QS. al-Tawbah [9]: 111)

War, thus, becomes the highest form of surrender to God—not out of victory, but out of a willingness to sacrifice selflessly.

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d. Jihad as an Education of the Soul

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلمviewed the battlefield as a place of spiritual education. Companions learn courage, patience, and compassion in the midst of tension. When one of the companions killed an enemy who was already lying down after provoking, he rebuked him severely:

"Did you kill him after he said *the sun of Allah*?"
(HR. al-Bukhārī, no. 4269; Muslim, no. 96)

Here, spiritual value is higher than tactical victory.
War becomes a moral laboratory where sincerity is tested in the most extreme form.

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e. Grace in War: The Paradox of Victory

The conquest of Mecca (*Fath Makkah*) is the highest example of the spirituality of war.
After years of suffering, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلمentered the city without a grudge, but with love:

"Go, you are all free."
(HR. Ibn Hisham, al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah)

It showed that true victory is not when the enemy is conquered, but when hatred turns to forgiveness.
This is the pinnacle of war spirituality—when the sword is lowered because love overcomes anger.

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f. Sufistic Interpretation: War as an Inner Metaphor

The Sufis developed an understanding of jihad as a symbol of spiritual journey. Al-Ghazālī writes in *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* that "the war against lust is a greater obligation than the war against an external enemy." Ibn ʿArabī added that every ego impulse is an 'enemy within' that must be conquered through dhikr and monotheistic awareness.

In mystical language, external warfare is simply a reflection of the inner war against greed, anger, and pride. Thus, jihad al-nafs is at the core of every form of spiritual struggle.

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g. Spirituality of Balance: Between War and Peace

Islam does not idealize war, but neither does it fulfill passive peace.
True peace is the result of justice, not compromise against falsehood. Therefore, jihad and peace are two wings of one bird—both are needed to maintain moral balance.

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا
"Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight you, but do not go beyond the limit."
(QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 190)

This verse affirms the spiritual limits of war: against tyranny, not against violence.

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h. Synthesis: War as a Path of Self-Cleansing

Through war waged with moral awareness, man learns:

- **Controlling the ego,**
- **Erase the love of the world,**
- **Upholding justice,**
- **Purify intentions.**

War, in this sense, is the supreme spiritual path—because it demands moral courage, patience, compassion, and self-control to the utmost extent.

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم turned war into the worship of the heart; it was not a destructive impulse, but the culmination of submission to the Divine will.

"Indeed, the greatest jihad is to conquer anger when you are able to retaliate."
(Meaning of hadith, al-Bayhaqī, al-Zuhd al-Kabīr)

Thus, jihad in Islam is a spiritual journey to God through social and moral responsibility, not violence.
He taught that even in conflict, man can find a path to inner silence and grace.

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